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C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 001524

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL GH ECOWAS

SUBJECT: ACCRA III IS ON (FOR NOW)

REF: ABIDJAN 1673

Classified By: Polchief Richard Kaminski, reason 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (C) On July 21, in a briefing for the diplomatic corps, Foreign Minister Nana Akufo-Addo formally announced the holding of the Accra III peace talks July 29-30. Akufo-Addo listed presidents Mbeki, Obasanjo, Bongo, Toure, Kerekou and Kufuor as attendees, as well as Prime Minister Sama of Togo, ECOWAS Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas, UNSG Kofi Annan, and all the political players in Cote d'Ivoire, including Gbagbo, Ouattara, Bedie, Diarra and Soro. He also passed out copies of a statement on the AU summit he had presented to Parliament. He then took questions.

¶2. (C) When asked of Abidjan press speculation on a possible postponement (reftel), Akufo-Addo uncharacteristically hesitated, and then said that "if the parties feel that not enough has been completed" (re LMA legislation and other items), a postponement could result. However, he said that "for the time being," the conference was on. "Let's cross the bridge when we come to it," he remarked. He reiterated that the GOG had firm commitments of participation from everyone he had mentioned.

¶3. (C) In response to another question, he said that a pre-Accra III negotiation session, involving the Ivorian parties, President Kufuor, and Chambas, was planned. Soro would arrive over the weekend, he said, with Bedie and Diarra coming the 26th, and Ouattara the 27 (he mentioned no date for President Gbagbo).

¶4. (C) In the hallways of the conference center after the briefing, Ghanaian Foreign Ministry officials told polchief that an emissary from President Gbagbo was expected that day, bringing an "important" (undisclosed) message. The Moroccan Ambassador, who we find usually quite well informed, told us later that "of course it's a request to put off the talks." However, Foreign Ministry Supervising Director Leslie Christian said that, although there had been initial hesitation from several of the Ivorian parties, "all" were now willing to attend.

¶5. (SBU) Comment. While acknowledging the potential for a postponement, Akufo-Addo advised the diplomatic corps that the planning for Accra III continues, a sentiment echoed by his ministry colleagues in the hallways afterwards. Much appears to depend upon the ability (and willingness) of Ivorian parties to redeem pledges made at the AU summit regarding LMA legislation and the like. End comment.

YATES